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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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Making sense of the world



JUNIOR

THE BEST
MAGAZINE FOR
CURIOUS KIDS

DENALI

Discover the mountain that soars
high above Alaska p12



DID YOU KNOW?

- Denali is the tallest peak in North America.
- It formed about 60 million years ago.
- It is important to Native Alaskan history.



This week's big news



DID YOU KNOW?

The International Court of Justice is based in the Netherlands, but its official languages are English and French.

A protester outside the International Court of Justice as the hearings began

Talks on plastic end



Negotiations for a legally binding international treaty to cut plastic pollution concluded on December 1 without an agreement. Representatives from more than 170 countries and 450 organizations participated in a week of talks in South Korea. They plan to meet again in 2025 to continue their work.

Climate case opens at UN court

On December 2, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) began hearing a climate case for the first time in its history. The case will determine whether international laws can be used to address climate change.

What is the International Court of Justice?

Located in the Hague, a city in the Netherlands, the ICJ is the main legal branch of the United Nations (UN, a group of 193 nations). It was created by the UN in 1945. Its purpose is to settle disagreements between countries and give opinions on legal issues brought before it by UN departments. The ICJ, nicknamed "the world court," is composed of 15 judges from around the world.

What is the case about?

The court will give its opinion on two main questions: Do international laws require governments to protect the planet from greenhouse gases (gases that remain in Earth's atmosphere and trap heat)? And what legal consequences do those nations face if they do not meet their climate obligations? In particular, the ICJ will determine whether governments could be held responsible for causing "significant harm" to small island nations, like Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon

Islands. While these countries contribute the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, they are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, flooding, and higher air and ocean temperatures.

How did the case come about?

In 2019, a group of 27 law students from the University of South Pacific in Vanuatu, an island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, were brainstorming solutions for tackling climate change. They came up with the idea of bringing the issue to the ICJ, but in order to do that, they first needed the support of the Pacific Islands



Cynthia Houniuhi

Forum (PIF). This is a group of 18 countries and territories in the South Pacific Ocean—including Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu—that work together to address issues in the region. The students started a group called Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC) and began campaigning for the PIF's support, which they received in 2022. With backing from the PIF, they were able to secure a meeting at the UN. That meeting was successful, and in 2023 the UN asked the ICJ to hear the case.

How will the case be presented?

The judges will listen to many different people at a series of hearings. Representatives from more than 100 nations and international organizations, including leaders of many island nations, will speak to the court. The US, the UK, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa are among the wealthier nations that are scheduled to speak, along with organizations that represent businesses that profit from fossil fuels (like coal, oil, and gas, which emit greenhouse gases). It will be the largest group of presenters in the ICJ's history.

What will happen next?

The hearings will end on December 13. After that, the judges will issue a ruling, expected in summer 2025. The ICJ's decision is not legally enforceable, but a decision by the court in favor of the smaller nations would put pressure on governments around the world. A favorable opinion could also lay the groundwork for more legal action and influence courts in the many individual nations where activists have sued governments and energy companies over climate issues. The case "is a great step for climate justice and the rights of future generations," said Cynthia Houniuhi, president of the PISFCC, who is from the Solomon Islands. "The world needs transformational change that accelerates climate action," she said.

This week's big news



Celebrating a historic leader

On November 30, New York City celebrated the first annual Shirley Chisholm Day, honoring a trailblazing member of Congress on what would have been her 100th birthday. Chisholm made history in 1968 as the first Black woman elected to the US House of Representatives (half of Congress). In 1972, she was the first Black person to seek the Presidential nomination from a major US political party and the first woman to seek it from the Democratic Party.

Chisholm was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924. Known as "Fighting Shirley," she served in the House until 1983, working on issues like racial and gender equality, healthcare, and education. Although she didn't win the Democratic Presidential nomination, her campaign paved the way for people of color and women to run for office. Chisholm died in 2005 at age 80.

On November 30, the Museum of the City of New York held a series of events and a government building in Brooklyn was rededicated in her honor. Speaking about her own legacy, Chisholm once said, "I want to be remembered as a woman who fought for change in the 20th century."



Shirley Chisholm

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A WELCOME ARRIVAL

A rare giant eland, the world's largest antelope, was born at Zoo Miami on November 27. The male calf weighs 65 pounds and could weigh as much as 2,000 pounds in adulthood. Zoo officials say he is "healthy and doing well."



The calf (right)

BEING THE BEST

Vito the pug has become the first of his breed to win the National Dog Show. The 2-year-old pup beat out nearly 2,000 other dogs from more than 200 breeds to earn the title of best in show. One judge described Vito as "everything a pug should be...lots of dog in a small package."



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The cheerleaders, young and old



A gray wolf in California

New wolf packs seen in California

Two new packs of endangered gray wolves have been identified in Northern California, bringing the total number of packs in the state to nine. It is estimated that there are currently 70 wolves living in California, a significant increase from 44 in 2023.

Although gray wolves are native to California, they disappeared from the state in the 1920s due to human activity like hunting. Their population has rebounded in recent years as wolves came from other states. In 2015, the first new pack in California in nearly 100 years was spotted.

The new packs were first seen on cameras placed in the forest, then confirmed by biologists monitoring the area. One of the packs, called the Diamond pack, lives in the Sierra Valley region. That pack has two wolves, one of which is female, but it is not clear if they are a pair of breeding

adults. The other pack, which has not been named yet, has two adult wolves and at least two pups.

Gray wolves are a keystone species, meaning they keep their ecosystem (group of living things that affect each other) in balance. For example, wolves hunt large animals like elk. When there are no wolves, the elk population grows and eats the plants in an area. That's bad for other animals that rely on those plants for food. By keeping elk numbers down, wolves help other animals.

But an increase in wolf numbers also has risks. For instance, gray wolves can attack livestock, which affects ranchers. The state will monitor wolves and work to find ways to address issues like this. In the meantime, the wolf population is expected to continue growing, with 30 pups born this year. That will lead to even more new packs.

A REASON TO CHEER

A 97-year-old woman in Michigan got the surprise of her life when Merrill High School's cheerleading squad came to visit. Ilagene Doebring, who helped start the team in 1945, was thrilled to put on a uniform and cheer with its current members. She even soared in the air for a stunt. "Don't act your age," Doebring said.



DID YOU KNOW?
Legal scholars do not agree on whether the Constitution gives Presidents the power to pardon themselves.



President Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden

The first pardon



George Washington (above) issued the first Presidential pardon in 1795. He pardoned two people who had been part of the Whiskey Rebellion, a violent protest in 1791 that included setting a fire. It was led by farmers who were angry that they had to pay taxes on crops that were used to make liquor.

President Biden pardons his son

On December 1, President Joe Biden issued a pardon to his son Hunter Biden, age 54, who was convicted earlier this year on charges of illegally buying a gun and tax evasion (avoiding paying taxes). It was a sweeping pardon that also prevents future charges from being brought against Hunter Biden for his actions from 2014 to 2024.

What is a Presidential pardon?

A pardon is when a President forgives someone for federal crimes they have been charged with or convicted of and reduces any punishment they have been sentenced to, including prison time. The Constitution (highest US law) grants Presidents with this broad power. Many Presidents have issued pardons near the end of their time in office, and family members have

been among those pardoned. For example, President Bill Clinton (1993–2001) pardoned his half brother, Roger, and Donald Trump (2017–2021) pardoned Charles Kushner, his daughter Ivanka's father-in-law.

What was Hunter Biden convicted of?

He pleaded guilty to nine charges related to failing to file tax returns from 2016 to 2020, lying on an application to buy a gun in 2018, and falsifying records. He was due to be sentenced by a judge this month, and that sentencing will not take place.

Why did Joe Biden issue the pardon?

After previously stating he would not pardon his son, the President said he changed his mind because he believed the charges against Hunter

were politically motivated. "Hunter was singled out only because he is my son—and that is wrong," Biden said, adding that, without a pardon, Hunter may have been further investigated once Donald Trump returns to office as President in January 2025. "Enough is enough," Biden said.

How did people react?

Hunter Biden issued a statement saying he had taken responsibility for his mistakes, including paying the taxes in full, and was relieved the ordeal was over. Trump said the pardon was "an abuse and miscarriage of justice." Some officials said Biden's decision would tarnish his legacy and erode the nation's confidence in the rule of law. Others agreed with Biden that the charges should never have been brought in the first place.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

December 14, 1985

First woman to lead Cherokee Nation

On December 14, 1985, Wilma Mankiller (1945–2010) became the first woman to be elected chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest Native American tribe in the US. Under her leadership, the Cherokee Nation, based in Oklahoma, more than doubled its membership, to 170,000 people, and improved education and healthcare for its members. She was chief until 1995.



Wilma Mankiller



National news



Shoveling snow in Derby, New York

Heavy snowfall affects millions

More than 4 million people have been affected by lake-effect snow in the Great Lakes region. By December 2, parts of western New York were blanketed with more than 5 feet of snow, while areas in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania received up to 3 feet of snow. Lake-effect snow occurs when colder air moves over the relatively warm water of the lakes. New York and Pennsylvania deployed their National Guards to assist with cleanup.



Moana 2

Movies break box office record

Ticket sales at the box office during the Thanksgiving weekend soared to \$420 million, smashing the previous record of \$315 million set in 2018. The success was led by the release of Disney's *Moana 2*, which broke the record for the biggest Thanksgiving movie opening of all time, earning \$225 million. People also flocked to see *Wicked* and *Gladiator II*, both of which opened on November 22.

demure

Word of the year announced

Dictionary.com has chosen its 2024 word of the year: demure. The word, which means "reserved or modest," experienced a rise in usage after influencer Jools Lebron used the phrase "very demure, very mindful" in a video to describe a sophisticated appearance or behavior. The phrase became a trend, and "demure" had 200 times more searches this year than last year on Dictionary.com.



The Christmas trees in Cross Hall

White House decorations revealed

First Lady Jill Biden revealed the 2024 White House holiday decorations on December 2. The theme, "Season of Peace and Light," was chosen to illuminate a path forward for the nation and the hope that America will be "blessed with the peace and light of the holiday season," Dr. Biden said.

The decorations, which are planned months in advance, are traditionally unveiled at this time each year. The displays include 83 Christmas trees, more than 28,125 ornaments and 2,200 doves, about 9,810 feet of ribbon, and 165,075 holiday lights. More than 300 volunteers put the decorations in place, and about 100,000 people are expected to view them this year.

Each decorative element encourages guests to embrace peace and light. For example, the rotating starlight and lush greenery in the East Wing evoke the peaceful tranquility of nature, and the East Colonnade's brass-colored bells, suspended from the ceiling, symbolize the peaceful sounds of the holiday season.



The Gingerbread White House

The official White House Christmas tree, an 18.5-foot-tall Fraser fir from North Carolina, stands floor to ceiling in the Blue Room. The room's chandelier was removed to accommodate the tree, which features a carousel and holiday candy treats. The official White House Menorah, created in 2021 by the White House Executive Residence Carpenter's Shop, is displayed in Cross Hall.

Hanging throughout the State Dining Room are colorful paper garlands provided by the families of two US Navy Vessels, the USS Delaware and the USS Gabrielle Giffords. The ornaments on this room's trees are self-portraits made by students from across the US, ensuring that children see themselves reflected in the display.

In the White House Holiday Guide, President Joe Biden and the First Lady wrote about celebrating their final holiday in the White House. "We've loved opening the doors of the People's House wider and wider each year. America's story is your story, and we hope you feel at home here."

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Loose horse wrangled after running on Utah highway" UPI





Around the world



Zagreb, Croatia Advent festivities begin

Croatia's capital city began its seasonal holiday celebrations on November 30 by lighting the first Advent candle of the year. Zagreb is famous for its Christmas festivities, which first started in 2010. Each year the city is adorned with decorations, and special holiday markets pop up throughout its streets and public squares. This year, there are also two trams running through Zagreb, driven by Santa.



Syria Conflict escalates

Fighting broke out across Syria after rebels launched surprise attacks on government forces in Aleppo, one of Syria's largest cities. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group based in Idlib province, is leading the opposition against the government of President Bashar al-Assad in a war that has been ongoing for 13 years. When *The Week Junior* went to press, HTS had captured Aleppo and was advancing toward the capital, Damascus.



Uruguay Former history teacher wins election

A new president has been chosen after Uruguay's election on November 24. Yamandú Orsi, a former history teacher, dancer, and mayor, beat Álvaro Delgado from the party currently in charge. In a speech, Orsi said he wanted to be a president for everyone living in Uruguay and make sure no one is left behind. He will start serving in the role on March 1, 2025.

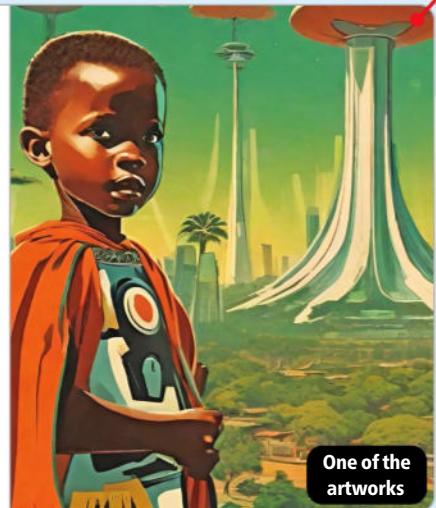
London, United Kingdom Pets walk in holiday parade

On November 30, about 130 dogs in festive outfits marched in the Rescue Dogs of London & Friends Christmas Jumper Parade, which raised money to help dogs from overseas find homes. (In the UK, jumper means sweater.) The pooches strutted along a road to Buckingham Palace. Prizes were awarded to the best-dressed dogs, including puppy elves.



Nairobi, Kenya Imagining the future

Seven artists from an organization called Kairos Futura were recently featured in an art show in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. Kairos Futura's goal was to create a positive vision of the future through their art. The exhibition, which ran until November 30, explored ways to ease the city's problems, including poverty and environmental issues like flooding. The art depicts futuristic utopias (imagined, perfect societies) that are inspired by nature.



Around the world



Mannheim, Germany Super-long tram unveiled

The world's longest tram has made its debut in Germany. It is 192 feet long and can hold 368 passengers. The vehicle, which can be split into smaller trams, runs along a route connecting three cities and can reach speeds of up to 50 miles per hour. It beat the world record of a tram in Budapest, Hungary, which is 183 feet long.



Protests in the capital

Georgia Thousands demonstrate against decision

On November 28, Georgia's newly elected government said it is pausing the country's attempt to join the European Union (EU, a group of 27 nations) for at least four years. Critics think the ruling Georgian Dream party wants the government to build a closer relationship with Russia, which will isolate Georgia from the rest of Europe. Thousands of people protested the news in Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, and at least seven other cities.



Art at the airport

Hong Kong Panda sculptures go on display

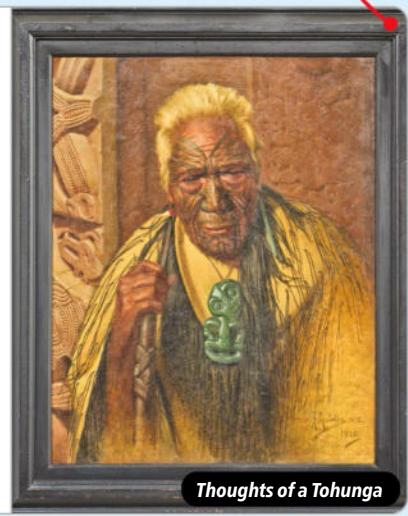
Thousands of sculptures of giant pandas are bringing joy to people in Hong Kong. The 2,500 sculptures, made with recycled materials, were inspired by the birth of twin panda cubs at the city's Ocean Park earlier this year. The artworks were revealed at a panda-themed exhibition at Hong Kong's airport on December 1. Over the next month, they will be displayed at four other locations, including Ocean Park.



A Patagonian mara in the desert

Dubai, United Arab Emirates Rodents baffle visitors

Patagonian maras (a species of rodent) are living at Al Qudra Lakes, a tourist spot in Dubai's desert. The animals usually live in Argentina, in South America, but appeared at the lakes in 2020. It is estimated that there could be 200 maras in the area, but no one is sure how they got there. A local wildlife expert said they must have escaped from a private zoo.



Thoughts of a Tohunga



The big debate

Should schools still have snow days?

Some think they're a thing of the past, but others say they make special memories.

What you need to know

- “Snow days” are when school is canceled because winter weather makes it unsafe to get there.
- In recent years, many states including Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia have allowed schools to redefine snow days as “virtual learning days.”
- In 2020, New York City, the country’s largest school system, canceled snow days for the entire school year.
- Shortly after, a New Jersey district said it would keep them so students can “just be kids playing in the snow.”



FUN FACT

Traditionally, kids hoping for a snow day wore their pajamas inside out and backward or slept with a spoon under their pillow.

In many parts of the US, students get a day off when snow makes it too difficult or unsafe to get to school. Snow days have traditionally been a time for sipping hot cocoa, building a snowman, sledding—and no schoolwork. Now that technology has made remote learning widespread, however, students have the ability to learn from home during any kind of weather. As a result, some school districts are canceling snow days for good. Others believe snow days should stay. They point out that they’re a break from the stress of schoolwork and time for kids to fully enjoy the wonders of winter. What do you think? Should schools still have snow days?

Yes—they’re the most magical days

One of the best things about living in a place that gets snow is snow days. There’s nothing like finding out school is closed because of a snowstorm and spending the day baking cookies, making snow angels, and watching movies. These are some of the best childhood memories. Also, people may lose power in snowstorms, and many kids across the US don’t have reliable internet access in the first place. Requiring them to do schoolwork at home would be unfair. Besides, everyone, including teachers, needs a reason to take an unexpected break once in a while. That kind of magic only happens on snow days.

No—we don’t need them anymore

Snow days are fun, but they’re just not necessary in today’s world. Students can now learn virtually without missing instruction time. And let’s face it, snow days aren’t a day of relaxation and play for everybody. Parents who need to work and can’t leave their children home alone have to scramble for childcare on snow days. That’s stressful. Snow days are difficult for school officials and teachers too. They have to add days of instruction to the end of the school year to make up for lost class time. That alone makes snow days not worth it. It’s no fun to spend warm, sunny days in class making up days that were given in the winter.

YES Three reasons schools should still have snow days

- 1 Snow days are special and will be remembered for years to come.
- 2 Not everyone has equal access to the internet at home, so requiring virtual learning on those days would be unfair.
- 3 It’s nice for students and teachers to have a reason to take a sudden break from the stress of school.

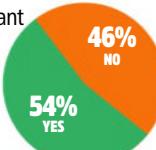
NO Three reasons schools should not still have snow days

- 1 They’re no longer necessary now that most schools are set up for remote learning.
- 2 Snow days have always been stressful for parents who have to work and can’t leave their children alone.
- 3 It’s a drag to have to make up snow days by adding class time when it’s nice out at the end of the school year.

LAST WEEK’S POLL

Last week, we asked if more cities should reduce speed limits. The vote was close:

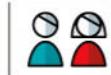
54% of you want cars to slow down, and 46% said it’s not necessary.



What do you think?

Now that you’ve read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think schools should still have snow days or NO if you don’t. We’ll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.



Photographing the world

Ami Vitale is an award-winning *National Geographic* photojournalist—as well as a judge for *The Week Junior*'s annual Nature Photo Contest. She is also the founder of Vital Impacts, a nonprofit that supports conservation through art. She spoke to *The Week Junior* about her career.

Did you study photography in college?
I studied international relations and had a minor in journalism. Later, I returned to school to study filmmaking to better capture the stories I wanted to tell.

When did you become interested in nature photography?

I began my career with a focus on war and human conflict, but I soon realized that nearly every story of human struggle is rooted in environmental issues like resource shortages and climate change. At that point, I shifted my focus to stories about the connection between people and the planet.



Photo taken by Vitale in Kenya

What is your favorite place to photograph?

I'm especially drawn to Kenya. The people are inspiring, and their efforts to protect

wildlife show how communities can live in harmony with nature.

Do you have a favorite memory of your photography travels?

In China, I documented giant pandas. To get close to the pandas, I wore a panda suit scented with panda urine. It was uneasy but worth it to witness these incredible creatures up close.

How do you like judging our Nature Photo Contest?

I've loved seeing the creativity and passion of young photographers. Their work reminds me of how nature inspires curiosity and encourages meaningful conversations.

Any advice for aspiring photographers?

Stay curious and keep exploring! Find your unique voice and don't be afraid to tell the stories that matter to you.



DID YOU KNOW?

The first photograph published in a newspaper appeared in France's *L'illustration* in 1848 and depicted Paris streets.

Ami Vitale

Young sports voice

At age 13, Pepper Persley of New York City is the youngest person ever to call games for the NBA and WNBA, as well as Major League Baseball. She launched her career at age 6, and by age 10 she was reporting for the WNBA as a sideline reporter for ESPN and the Las Vegas Aces. She also hosts the *Dish with Pepper* podcast, where she interviews athletes, coaches, and sports insiders. In February, Persley published a children's book, *Not Too Anything*, which is about bullying and was inspired by her own school experiences.



Pepper Persley



Jeff Kinney

Author on a mission

Jeff Kinney, the best-selling author and illustrator of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books, recently went on a nationwide tour to promote *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hot Mess*, the 19th book in the series. He made the tour special by traveling across the country in a Wimpy Kid food truck—but instead of serving things to eat, he dished out a variety of books. At each stop, Kinney performed interactive one-hour stage shows and made surprise school visits, but his main goal was to empower young readers. “The most important thing for a kid is to be able to choose their own book,” Kinney said.

OVERHEARD



“Move with grace. Trust the journey.”

Hip-hop and R&B singer Mary J. Blige, age 53, during her Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony acceptance speech



Animals and the environment



DID YOU KNOW?
Most adult cats meow only at humans, not at other cats.

A cat can tell when a picture and a word don't match.

Do cats know their size?

It's said that cats are "liquid," contorting their bodies to fit any space. Péter Pongrácz put this to the test by encouraging cats to walk through holes of different sizes. Cats hesitated when the opening was short, suggesting awareness of their own body size. But when it was narrow, they still tried to squeeze through.



Cats recognize words and images

Cats don't always respond when people talk to them, but they may be listening more closely than we think. According to the results of a new study, our feline friends can learn to associate spoken words with images.

A research team led by Saho Takagi of Azabu University in Japan ran an experiment with 31 cats. They gave the cats a word and picture test that is typically given to human infants.

Researchers played a recording of the cats' owners saying a meaningless word: either "parumo" or "keraru." While listening to each word, the cats were shown either a picture

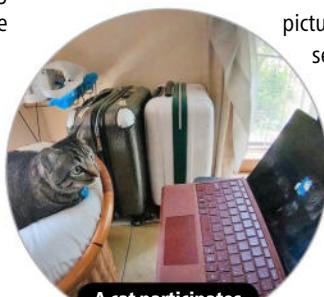
of a red sun or a blue-and-white unicorn on a screen. The pictures grew and shrank in order to hold the cats' attention. The word-picture combinations were repeated several times until the cats got used to them and started to display signs of boredom.

In the next stage of the study, researchers showed one of the images to the cats again. But for half of the cats, they changed the word that was played along with it. The cats that heard the "wrong" word spent more time staring at the image, indicating that they were confused as to why they were not hearing the original word. Some of the cats'

pupils grew larger as they gazed at the screen, another sign that they were confused by what they were seeing and hearing. "It was cute to see how seriously they participated in the experiment," Takagi told the journal *Science*.

Most cats seemed to develop a word-picture association after two nine-second training sessions. That's faster than human babies learned the connections in similar experiments.

This study adds to a growing body of research on cats' ability to understand language. For example, previous studies have found that cats can recognize their own names and the names of their human and feline family members. "Cats pay attention to what we say in everyday life—and try to understand us—more than we realize," Takagi said.



A cat participates in the study.



PLACE OF THE WEEK

Padre Island National Seashore, Texas

Padre Island National Seashore consists of 70 miles of beaches, dunes, and grasslands. It is famous for the five species of sea turtles that visit the area. Kemp's ridley sea turtles, the most endangered sea turtle species in the world, nest there, and visitors can see newly hatched Kemp's ridleys make their way across the beach and into the water. Coyotes, deer, and black-tailed jackrabbits also inhabit the park. It is located on the Central Flyway, a major route for birds migrating south and a popular stop for sandhill cranes, great blue herons, and redhead ducks.



A black-tailed jackrabbit



PENGUIN PRESENTS

Adelie penguins in Antarctica bring rare rocks as gifts to impress a possible partner.



A Victoria's riflebird in Australia

Riflebirds drum on their feathers

Male riflebirds use fancy flirting and unusual sounds to capture the attention of their feathered female friends. According to a new study, these flashy birds use their beaks to drum on their wings.

Riflebirds live in rainforests in Australia and New Guinea. They are one of about 45 species in the bird-of-paradise family, which is known for having decorative feathers and dramatic courtship rituals. Male riflebirds put on an elaborate show, rocking from side to side and up and down while moving toward a female.

Riflebirds often accompany their mating dance with a loud, clacking beat, but researchers weren't sure how the birds made the sound until they filmed one in action. First, the bird bent its extremely flexible wrists to fan out its wing feathers, sort of like a bodybuilder flexing his muscles. Next, it swung its head around and banged on the outstretched feathers with its beak, as though it was playing a drum set or a xylophone. The rhythmic maneuver demonstrates the bird's abilities and helps it attract its potential mate.

Animal of the Week

Greater bamboo lemur



A greater bamboo lemur was born in the UK's Cotswold Wildlife Park as part of a breeding program to save this critically endangered species. Cotswold is one of two zoos in the world to successfully breed the rare creatures in 2024.

- **LIFE SPAN:** Up to 17 years in human care
- **HABITAT:** Rainforests in Madagascar
- **SIZE:** 16–18 inches plus a tail 17–19 inches long
- **Bamboo, fruits, and flowers**
- **FUN FACT:** Lemurs have a special claw on each foot that they use to groom their fur.



Good week / Bad week



Siamese crocodiles

In Southeast Asia, Siamese crocodiles have made a comeback from the brink of extinction. Farmers who once hunted them helped experts identify them and start a breeding program. Now about 1,000 crocs live in the wild.

Dolphins

Researchers found microplastics in the breath of dolphins in Florida and Louisiana. They think the animals inhale tiny plastic particles when they come up for deep breaths of air. Experts are concerned that this could harm the dolphins' health.



Kerry Nicholson
Wildlife biologist

"Why do wolves howl at the Moon?" Faylen, 11, California



There are many reasons wolves howl, but there is no evidence that it is linked to Moon phases. Wolves howl as a form of social communication, to find a mate, or to locate one another if they get lost or separated from their pack. When they howl, they raise their noses to the sky to help the sound travel farther.

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to hello@theweekjunior.com. Find out more about wolves at livescience.com/27909-wolves.html.



A tall mountain rises

Thousands of visitors head to Denali and its surrounding park every year.

Soaring into the skies above Alaska, Denali is the tallest mountain in North America and an icon of the natural world.



What is Denali?

The mountain formed about 60 million years ago. It is located in the middle of Alaska, as part of a 600-mile-long group of mountains called the Alaska Range. A 2015 measurement based on GPS data found that Denali has a height of 20,310 feet. It is the third highest of the "Seven Summits," the highest mountains on each continent. From its mountain base, the summit is about 18,000 feet tall. Today, Denali is part of the 6-million-acre Denali National Park and Preserve.

History of exploration

Native Alaskans have lived in the area around Denali for thousands of years. The first non-Native record of the mountain was made in 1794 by English explorer George Vancouver, who referred to the region's "stupendous snow mountains." After the US purchased Alaska in 1867, Denali and the surrounding area became increasingly popular with gold prospectors. In 1913, a team of climbers led by Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens were the first to reach Denali's summit. The national park was established in February 1917.



Native Alaskans in 1903



The mountain range as seen from Reflection Pond in Denali National Park, Alaska

Animals of Denali

Brush-footed butterfly

One of the most common butterfly types found in Denali, the brush-footed butterfly includes species such as the Alaskan fritillary (shown at right).



Wood frog

This is Denali National Park's only amphibian (animal that lives in land and in water). Most frog species can't survive the cold in Alaska, but wood frogs freeze solid in winter, then thaw in the spring.





above Alaska



WOW!

An 11-year-old named Galen Johnston became the youngest person to reach Denali's summit in 2001.



Barack Obama
in Alaska

Deciding on a name

At least nine Indigenous groups have their own names for the mountain. One of them is Denali, often translated to "the tall one" or "the great one." But the first official name—Mount McKinley—was suggested by a gold prospector named William Dickey, an admirer of future US President William McKinley, in an 1897 newspaper article. That name became more popular after McKinley was assassinated (killed for political reasons) in 1901 and was formally recognized by Congress when the park was established in 1917. Yet this name was always controversial in Alaska. Leaders there tried to get the name formally changed to Denali in 1975, but the US government refused. President Barack Obama officially changed the name to Denali in 2015.



Climbing
Denali

The mountain today

Denali National Park has a diverse ecosystem (group of plants or animals that affect one another) with a range of habitats including forests, meadows, and tundras. Glaciers flow away from the mountains to cover about a million acres in the park. Those glaciers also feed into rivers that flow for miles. A wide range of wildlife (see box at left) inhabits the park, and Alaska Natives continue to live around the area. Denali is also a popular attraction for tourists. About 600,000 people visit the park every year, and more than 1,000 people came to climb the mountain itself in 2023.

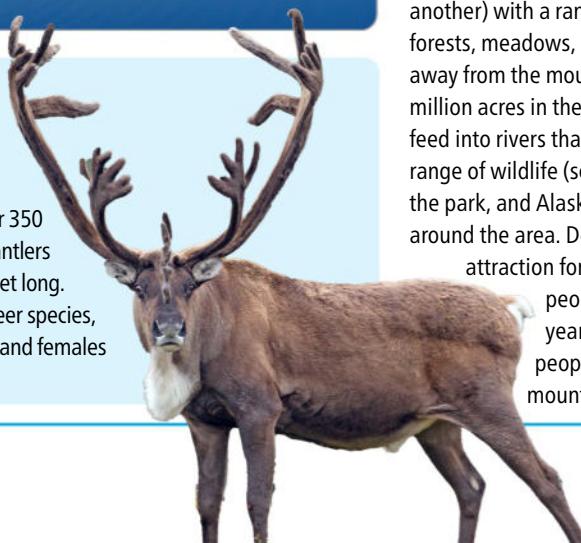


Gyrfalcon

While many of the park's birds leave for the winter, the gyrfalcon lives in Denali year-round. It is the world's largest falcon species, with a wingspan that reaches nearly 4½ feet.

Caribou

About 1,730 caribou live in the park. They can weigh over 350 pounds, with antlers more than 3 feet long. Unlike other deer species, caribou males and females grow antlers.





Science and technology

WOW!
Johannes Vermeer's painting *Girl with a Pearl Earring* recently went on a worldwide tour and was viewed by 1.5 million people in one year.

A museum visitor views *Girl with a Pearl Earring* in person.

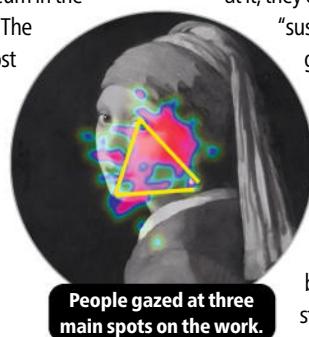


The power of seeing art up close

Paintings and other forms of visual art can be beautiful and moving whether you see them in the pages of a book, on a poster, or in person. But a new study found that seeing a real work of art up close—instead of a photo of it—makes people more emotional. A team of neuroscientists (scientists who study the brain) conducted the research at the Mauritshuis museum in the Hague, a city in the Netherlands. The study included the museum's most famous work, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, painted in 1665 by Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer.

Researchers observed how people reacted to five different paintings. First, participants were fitted with eye-tracking equipment and a brain scanner called an EEG (see box at right). They were asked to look at the real paintings on display and at posters of three of the artworks in the museum library. A second group of volunteers was asked to view reproductions of the five paintings while their brain activity was being measured by a type of scan called an MRI.

The results revealed that people's emotional response was 10 times stronger when they were looking at the actual paintings. The part of the



People gazed at three main spots on the work.

brain that was most active while they looked at the artwork was the precuneus, an area that controls personal identity and consciousness (awareness of one's own thoughts and surroundings).

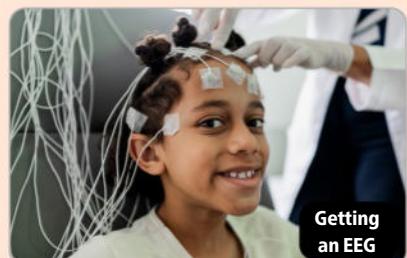
The team found that out of all the paintings, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* caused the biggest reaction. Results showed that when volunteers looked at it, they experienced something called a "sustained attentional loop" when their gaze was drawn to specific spots on the painting over and over.

People's gaze was first drawn to the girl's left eye, then her mouth, then to her pearl earring. This eye movement repeated in a loop, as if viewers were trapped by the painting, causing them to stare at it for longer. "You have to pay attention whether you want to or

not," said Martin de Munnik, an author of the study.

"It's so important to engage with art, whether it's photography or dance or old masters from the 17th century," said Martine Gosselink, the director of the Mauritshuis. The experience, she said, "really helps to develop your brain." The researchers said it would be interesting to do the same study on other famous paintings, such as the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci.

What is an EEG?



Getting an EEG

EEG stands for electroencephalogram, a painless, non-invasive scan that records brain activity. The brain contains billions of neurons (nerve cells that carry information to and from the brain) that communicate with one another using electrical signals. During an EEG, small metal discs are attached to a person's head. The discs are connected to a machine that measures those electrical signals.

Doctors or scientists can study the electrical signals to find out which sections of the brain are responding at any given moment and how strongly. An EEG can help researchers learn more about someone's brain activity in certain situations. Doctors use them to check a patient's medical condition to determine whether a head injury is serious, for example.



Studying how ants became farmers

The asteroid that wiped out the dinosaurs killed off about 75% of all living things on Earth, but according to a new study, it actually helped ants. Scientists at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, think the asteroid created the perfect conditions for a relationship between ants and fungi to develop. That turned the ants into farmers and helps keep them alive today.

Modern leafcutter ants can't digest leaves, but they need the nutrition that's inside them. To solve this problem, the insects use farming skills. They gather leaves and feed them to fungi (living organisms like mushrooms, mold, or mildew that feed off rotting material from other living things). The fungi

digest the leaves, and the ants eat the fungi to get nutrients from the leaves.

The ants learned to do this after the asteroid hit, when a massive cloud of dust blocked out Earth's sunlight. Most plants and animals died, leaving behind decaying material for fungi to feed off.

As the fungi thrived, ants started to eat it and also thrived.

Eventually, the ants started taking the fungi out of the damp forests where they flourished and moving them to much drier areas. This meant that to survive, the fungi had to rely on ants and the leaves the insects gave them. The way ants adapted the fungi for their own use is very similar to the way humans started farming crops for food many millions of years later.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY
Leafcutter ants "cut" off leaves with their powerful jaws and can carry objects up to 50 times their body weight.



A leafcutter ant carries a piece of a leaf.

Your hand position affects the flight of the disc.



What's the best way to throw a Frisbee?

Scientists at Berry College in Georgia found that there's an ideal way to throw a Frisbee. They conducted a study to find the best way to hold the flying disc for the fastest launch and highest spin rate.

To find the most effective grip, the researchers studied thumb positions of 24 disc golf players. Disc golf is a sport in which players try to throw a Frisbee into a metal basket.

Players were asked to throw a disc five times using five different

thumb grips, for a total of 25 throws each. Their thumbs were placed from 1 inch to 3.7 inches from the outer edge of the disc. A sensor on the disc tracked its speed and rotation.

The team studied about 600 throws and found that positioning the thumb about 1.2 inches from the disc's outer edge resulted in the best spin rate and launch speed as well as the longest flight. Next, they hope to study thumb positioning on different sizes and types of discs.



A food wrap that kills bacteria



The wrap turns from yellow (left) to brown (right).

Although traditional plastic wrap blocks bacteria, it doesn't kill the germs that can grow on food. A new material does that and more—and it's made from avocado seeds.

Scientists in Singapore chose avocado seeds because they contain three natural

compounds. Two of them kill harmful bacteria that grows on food, while the third changes color, from yellow to brown, as food spoils. They tested the wrap on prawns and noted that the film changed color even before the shellfish started to look or smell bad.



Photos of the week

2024
BIRD
PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR
FINALISTS



Stunning sight

Andrés Luis Domínguez Blanco won 2024 Young Bird Photographer of the Year with this shot taken in Spain.



Blending in

This image of an Eastern screech owl was taken by Robert Gloeckner in the US.

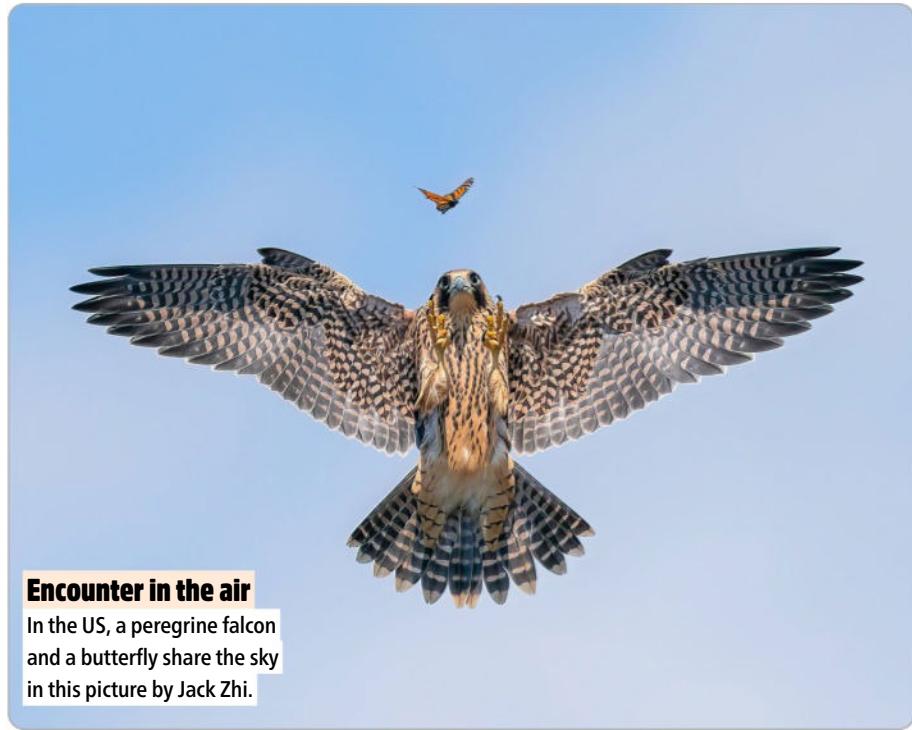


Photos of the week



Hello there

Jonas Beyer took this close-up of seabirds swimming in Antarctica.



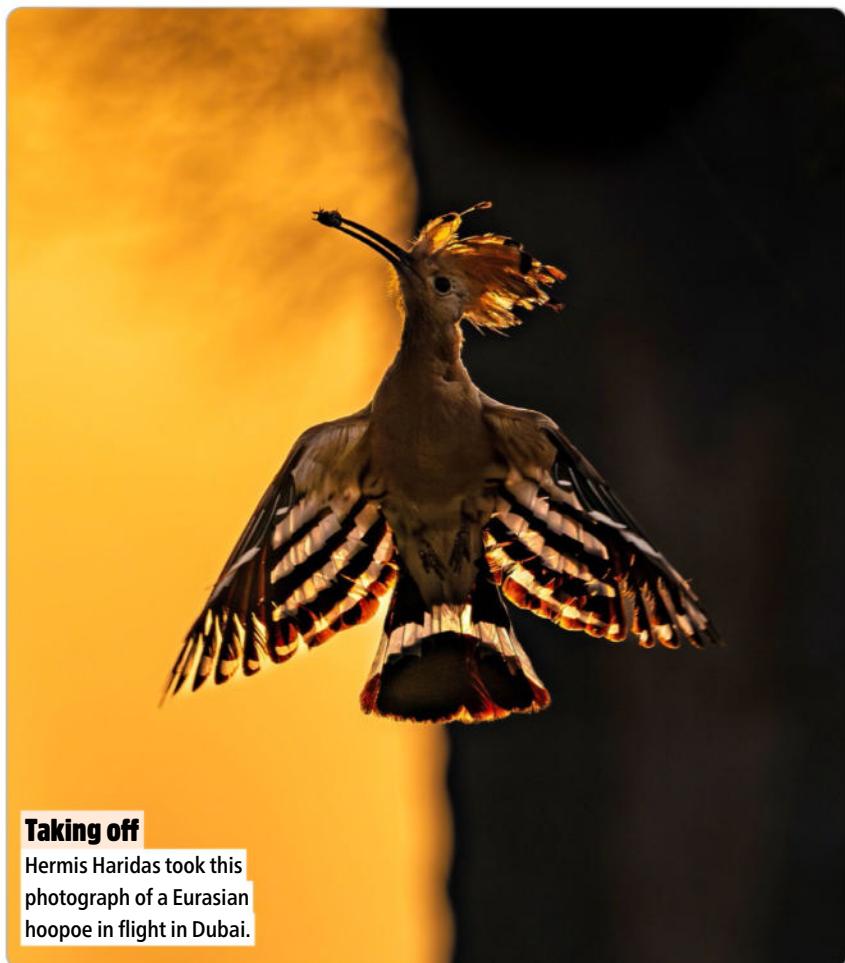
Encounter in the air

In the US, a peregrine falcon and a butterfly share the sky in this picture by Jack Zhi.



Perfect perch

Alan Murphy shot this image of a gray-crowned rosy finch in the US.



Taking off

Hermis Haridas took this photograph of a Eurasian hoopoe in flight in Dubai.



Sports

BIG MOVE

In 1905, US President Theodore Roosevelt helped bring the forward pass to football to make the game safer.



Post-game problems



At the end of four Rivalry Week games, players from the winning visiting teams (including Texas, above) tried to plant their school flag on the home team's logo on the field. It led to player fights, including a big one that earned Michigan and Ohio State \$100,000 fines.

Rivalry Week in college football

One of the most exciting times in college football takes place every November: Rivalry Week. This year, from November 28 to November 30, many teams across the country faced their main rivals, and several of the games were unforgettable.

The annual competition between the University of Michigan and Ohio State University is one of the biggest showdowns, and on November 30, more than 106,000 fans filled Ohio Stadium for the game. Ohio State, which were 10–1 and ranked second in the country, were heavily favored to win, but they lost to unranked Michigan, 13–10. It was the fourth time in a row that Michigan came away the winner.



LaNorris Sellers

The game had been tied, 10–10, with six minutes remaining. At that point, Michigan received the ball and put together an 11-play drive that led to a field goal and a three-point lead with 45 seconds remaining. Ohio State was unable to move the ball into field goal range, and Michigan held on for the upset.

In another thrilling contest, unranked Georgia Tech visited their rival, the University of Georgia, which came into the game ranked sixth. Georgia Tech had a 17–0 lead at halftime and were up 27–13 with little more than five minutes left in the fourth quarter. However, Georgia managed to tie it up and force overtime. In college football overtime, each team gets a

chance to score from their opponent's 25-yard line, and if the score is still tied, they do it again. The two teams were still tied after that, so they took turns trying to make two-point conversions. The game was decided during the eighth possession of overtime when Georgia made their conversion and won, 44–42.

In other notable games, third-ranked University of Texas beat 20th-ranked Texas A&M, 17–7, and 15th-ranked University of South Carolina beat 12th-ranked Clemson University on the road, 17–14. South Carolina trailed 14–7 at the start of the third quarter but pulled off a comeback win with a minute left in the game, when quarterback LaNorris Sellers ran in a 20-yard touchdown. In another shocker, unranked Syracuse University beat sixth-ranked University of Miami, 42–38.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

BASKETBALL

In a December 1 matchup of the best two teams in the NBA's Eastern Conference, the top-ranked Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Boston Celtics, the league's defending champions, 115–111. During the fourth quarter, the Cavs trailed by 12 points, but Donovan Mitchell scored 20 points to help them make their comeback.

The victory broke the Celtics' seven-game winning streak.



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

On December 1, the Buffalo Bills beat the San Francisco 49ers, 35–10. In the third quarter, Bills quarterback Josh Allen threw and caught for a touchdown on the same play.

LUGE

At the World Cup season opener on November 30, US lugers Chevonne Forgan and Sophia Kirkby became the first US women to win a doubles luge World Cup event. They beat a German team by .017 of a second.



ICE TIME

The video game NHL 25 now includes all six PWHL teams and their players.



Jesse Compher of the Toronto Sceptres (left) and Aerin Frankel of the Boston Fleet

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Karlie Lema

AGE: 21 SPORT: SOCCER

TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Strong start I started playing soccer when I was around 9. Watching my brother play helped me get into it. I played on his team, so that was fun.

Top team I've been going to my college's summer soccer camps for a long time. They reached out to me during my freshman year of high school, and I committed to play for the team.

Tough time I had hip surgery after my freshman season and couldn't play for a while. Watching from the sidelines is hard, but I told myself, "You're gonna be back and better," and that proved true.



Mental shift When I was younger, I wouldn't talk to people after I lost or did poorly in a game. Now I look at what I could have done better, and after I figure it out, I try to put it in the back of my head and move on. There's always another game.

Jet set This season, our team joined the ACC, a conference based on the East Coast. The competition is really good, but we've had to travel to the East Coast twice. It means missing a week of class, so you really need good time-management skills.

Stat star For a few weeks this season, I was the leading goal scorer in the nation. That was pretty cool. Scoring is the best feeling.

Pro dreams I want to play in the NWSL and, I hope, for the US national team one day.

Big bonus Sports have shaped who I am through the skills that come with playing a team sport and the lessons you learn along the way. Some days or games are hard, but you show up each and every day for the girls next to you.

The PWHL is back in action

After a successful inaugural season earlier this year, the PWHL (Professional Women's Hockey League) began its second season on November 30. When the league launched, the six founding teams were identified only by their geographic locations. Now they are known as the Boston Fleet, Minnesota Frost, Montreal Victoire, New York Sirens, Ottawa Charge, and Toronto Sceptres. Minnesota is the defending champion.

There were two games on opening day. In the first one, Toronto hosted Boston and beat them, 3–1. Boston star Hilary Knight opened the scoring three minutes into the game, and Toronto tied it up later in the first period. Toronto's Hannah Miller broke the tie with less than two minutes to play in the third, and the Sceptres scored again in the final seconds to secure the win.

That evening, Montreal beat Ottawa, 4–3, in an exciting home game that went into overtime and ended in a penalty shootout. Both goaltenders saved the first four shots. Ottawa failed to score in their fifth attempt, but Montreal star Marie-Philip Poulin made her shot to grab the win.

The next day, New York visited Minnesota and defeated them, 4–3, in overtime. Minnesota scored the first two goals, but New York roared back with three unanswered goals. Minnesota tied the game late in the third period, which led the teams to overtime. New York's Alex Carpenter scored the game-winning goal 19 seconds into the extra period. Her teammate Sarah Fillier, who was the number one overall pick in the 2024 PWHL draft, had a strong debut and assisted on two of New York's goals.



COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach Name: Anné Lamas

Team Name: Irvine Swim

"Coach Anné is amazing! She always makes us feel good and pushes us to do our best. She teaches us different techniques and goes over them several times to make sure we understand. We love how she lets us choose games to play at the end of class and how she doesn't mind if they're a bit silly. We've improved so much and have become better swimmers because of her!"

Riya, 13; Nishant, 11; Rishav, 10; and Anaiya, 9, California



To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to hello@theweekjunior.com. Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.



Arts and entertainment



Star Wars:
Skeleton Crew

Star Wars series with kids

In *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew*, a group of young adventurers work together to find a way home from deep space.

More than 30 Star Wars-related films and TV series have been released since the franchise began in 1977. Now the first live-action story revolving around kids in that universe, *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew*, is making its debut. The first two episodes were released on Disney+ on December 3, and the next six will come out weekly.

Skeleton Crew follows adventurous Wim (played by Ravi Cabot-Conyers), caring KB (Kyriana Kratter), tech wiz Fern (Ryan Kiera Armstrong), and alien

Neel (Robert Timothy Smith). After they find a mysterious object, they're transported into deep space, where they run into odd creatures, pirates, and other dangers. As they try to get home, they are guided by a mentor played by Jude Law.

The series, which was made for Star Wars fans as well as newcomers, was created by director Jon Watts and writer Christopher Ford, both of whom worked on *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. They were inspired by their love for Star Wars and classic movies with kids, such as *The Goonies* and *E.T. the Extraterrestrial*.



Jude Law

The young stars told *The Week Junior* they enjoyed working on the series. "We got to do some of the stunts ourselves," Kratter said. "I loved filming on hoverbikes." A lot of filming was done on The Volume, a digital set covered in screens. "They had the most beautiful backgrounds and made you feel like you were there," Smith said.

Skeleton Crew has the "fearlessness and bravery" typical of a Star Wars story, Cabot-Conyers said, but "leans into what it means to be a kid and have to level up." It also highlights teamwork, friendship, and a big life lesson: "Sometimes kids can be better than adults at things," Smith said.

3 fun Star Wars facts

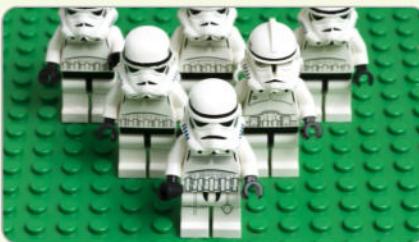
Far, far away

When *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* was released in 2017, the film was uplinked to the International Space Station so the astronauts on board could have the opportunity to watch it.



Big army

At the annual Star Wars Celebration in Chicago, Illinois, in 2019, there was a Lego Star Wars display featuring 36,440 Stormtrooper minifigures. It took 12 people 38 hours to build, with 16 hours spent assembling the minifigures.



Starry stash

Rancho Obi-Wan, located in Petaluma, California, is home to the world's largest Star Wars memorabilia collection. It is owned by Steve Sansweet, who started his collection in 1976 and now has more than 500,000 items.

Arts and entertainment



FUN FACT
That Christmas director Simon Otto used to be a professional snow sculptor.

That Christmas

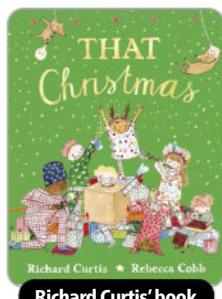
Holiday tale based on books

A new heartwarming animated comedy about holiday celebrations was just released on Netflix. *That Christmas* is based on the books *The Empty Stocking*, *Snow Day*, and *That Christmas* by Richard Curtis. He is an award-winning writer and director who has written many hit movies for adults, but this film is made for families.

Curtis co-wrote the screenplay for *That Christmas*. The film's director, Simon Otto, told *The Week Junior* that Curtis' films are special because they tell simple stories that are "incredibly relatable, inventive, and clever" and have a secret ingredient: wish fulfillment. This movie weaves together a story about a group of kids in a fictional English seaside town: twin sisters with very different personalities, a lonely boy who lives with his busy working mom, and a teen rebel. Just before

Christmas, a blizzard hits their area and affects everyone's plans in different ways.

Each snow shot in the film has 200,000 animated snowflakes—there are almost 2 billion in all. The animators also put fun details in some backgrounds. For example, Otto worked on the *How to Train Your Dragon* films, so there is a pub called How to Drain Your Flagon. Danny's room contains a figure from *Ron's Gone Wrong*, which was made by the same studio as *Last Christmas*. Although the film takes place at Christmas, Otto hopes viewers of all faiths will appreciate how it represents holidays and families. "Real life is chaotic, funny, unpredictable, and unexpected," he said. "We all have to remind ourselves that it doesn't matter how we celebrate. What matters is that we get to spend time with the ones we love."



Richard Curtis' book



READER RECOMMENDS

Doogie Kamealoha, M.D. (Disney+)

"This series is set in Hawaii and follows a 16-year-old girl, Lahela 'Doogie' Kamealoha, who is a doctor. Because she is supposed to be in high school like other people her age, she struggles with navigating friendships, relationships, and work. In each episode, there is a new problem for her to solve at home, the hospital, or both. I love this show because it's relatable and each episode has a meaningful message, such as the importance of making time for yourself, being mindful of others, and staying connected with your family. I highly recommend it!" Maggie, 11, Illinois

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to hello@theweekjunior.com.



THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST



Lego Marvel Avengers: Mission Demolition (Disney+)

The latest Lego special stars the Avengers in minifigure form. The action begins when superhero fan Dennis accidentally unleashes a villain who is set on taking down the heroes. After they are captured, Dennis has to save the day.



Flow

(In select theaters nationwide)

In this new animated film from Latvia, a lone cat teams up with a dog, a lemur, and other animals after a massive flood. Together, they navigate a transformed world and learn to embrace their differences in order to survive. The story is told using only natural sounds and no dialogue.



Rez Ball

(Netflix)

Basketball star LeBron James produced this sports drama, which is inspired by true events. It follows a basketball team from a Navajo Nation reservation trying to win the state championship. The players cope with personal loss and find resilience through teamwork. It is rated PG-13.



On screen

Battle

WOW!
In 2020, an original Pokémon card sold at an auction for \$369,000.

Pokémon Trading Card Game Pocket

Got it!

Trade digital Pokémon cards

Pokémon Trading Card Game Pocket is a new digital trading card game. It is out now exclusively for iOS and Android devices.

The first Pokémon video game was released by Nintendo in Japan in 1996, and the Pokémon Trading Card Game (TCG) was released in 1998—the same year they both arrived in North America. Originally, there were 102 cards featuring the colorful characters, but that number has grown with the introduction of new creatures. As of March, nearly 65 billion Pokémon cards had been produced worldwide.

Fans collect Pokémon cards for fun and also to use in tabletop competitions, where players try to "catch" Pokémon and engage them in battles. Each card contains information such as the Pokémon's type and what it takes for it to be knocked out. The game can be played with real cards as well

as online in Pokémon TGC Live. The new mobile game, however, has many new features that set it apart. For example, TCG Pocket features cards with nostalgic designs, including throwbacks to classic Pokémon from the first games. You can also collect "Immersive" cards, which take the digital capabilities to the next level, virtually bringing you into the image like a magic storybook. Players can open two packs of Pokémon cards every day and display them in digital collector books and boards that show off their flashy 3D design.

Pocket sets up matches for solo players and gamers who want to play others online. While the original game has gotten complicated over the years, this version of Pokémon TCG is simplified to help new players, with much smaller decks of cards and rules that are easier to understand.



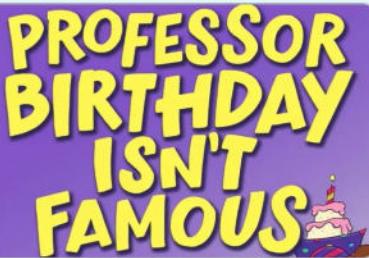
A Poké Ball

PODCAST OF THE WEEK

PROFESSOR BIRTHDAY ISN'T FAMOUS

Major podcast platforms

Professor Birthday is a TikTok star who wants to become famous like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. In this funny musical podcast, she explores birthday-related topics and interviews characters such as clowns and princesses.



WEBSITE OF THE WEEK



RASPBERRY PI PROJECTS

projects.raspberrypi.org

This site is for fans of computing, technology, and building. It is filled with ideas for projects you can make with hardware such as a Raspberry Pi (a type of small computer) or a 3D printer, as well as several different types of software. Projects include a 3D pendant, games, and robot buggies.

APP OF THE WEEK

SHADOW TRICK

Apple App Store, Google Play

A magic castle is the setting for this game, which has biomes filled with minions, traps, and boss fights. You play as a wizard who can transform into a shadow and switch between the real world and the shadow realm. To complete each level, you must dodge hidden threats and solve puzzles.



Book club



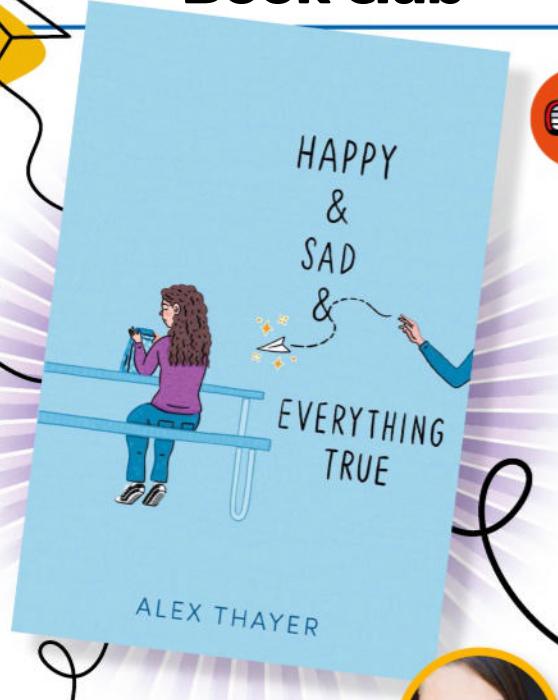
BOOK OF THE WEEK

Happy & Sad & Everything True

By Alex Thayer

(Aladdin)

Dee has no friends in her sixth-grade class, so she hides in the bathroom during snack breaks. She and Juniper used to be good friends, but Juniper is in a different class this year and has grown distant. One day in the bathroom, Dee overhears someone describe her as smelly, weird, and gross. When Dee's mom embarrasses her in front of the class during a special day at school, Dee flees to the bathroom again—only this time she hears a clang sound behind the grate in the wall. It's her classmate, Harry, who is also hiding. His father made him upset. They agree to talk through the opening the next day during snack break. Dee shows up, but in Harry's place is a second grader whose classmates called him "dumb." After Dee helps him and one of his friends, she gains a reputation for giving good advice. She also begins to receive notes from an admirer. Who is sending them? The bittersweet story ends with a major twist. You'll also learn who made those unkind comments about Dee. Through relatable dialogue and well-developed characters, the author captures how socially difficult middle school can be.



ASK THE AUTHOR

Alex Thayer

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

What inspired this book?

I came up with the idea of Dee, the main character, first. I couldn't get her out of my head, and I started to feel like I knew her so well that I wanted to write a book about her.

Why did you choose to write about middle school?

Middle school is such a complicated time for kids. So much is changing and going on, but that's also

what makes it an interesting time to write about.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I love to do yoga, play the piano, and read.

What was your favorite school lunch as a child?

Mini hot dogs with gravy, and peaches in syrup.

What three words would you use to describe friendship?

Kindness, understanding, acceptance.

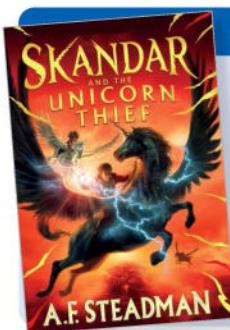


READER RECOMMENDS

Skandar and the Unicorn Thief By A.F. Steadman

"Skandar is a 13-year-old boy who takes a quiz to determine whether he can ride a unicorn or not. He goes to the Eyrie, which is a training ground for kids to learn how to ride and race unicorns. When he gets there, he finds out that someone is stealing unicorns from the famous riders he has read about. Skandar joins up with friends to help stop the thief." Addie, 14, Michigan

Do you have a book to recommend? Send your review to hello@theweekjunior.com.



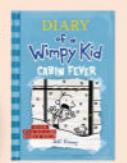
4 books to get you in the holiday spirit

Enjoy the magic and excitement of the season with these fun titles.



The Adventures of Penguin and Panda: Winterfest By Brenda Maier, illustrated by Fanni Mézes (Marble Press)

In this graphic novel, best friends Penguin and Panda shop for a Christmas tree, go sledding, and bake cookies. They also run into some obstacles. The last few pages include fun facts about penguins and pandas. Ages 7–10



Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever By Jeff Kinney

(Amulet Books)

This new collector's edition of the sixth book in this best-selling series comes with a paper ornament of Greg. The story takes place between Thanksgiving and Christmas and covers many holiday antics of the Heffley family. As Christmas nears, a surprise blizzard traps Greg and his family inside. Ages 8–12



Juniper's Christmas By Eoin Colfer

(Roaring Brook Press)

Eoin Colfer, best-selling author of the Artemis Fowl series, weaves a magical story about a young girl whose mom has mysteriously vanished. She asks a woodsman she believes is Santa Claus for help, but he's reluctant to get involved because he gave up being Santa 10 years ago. Ages 8–12



Rachel Friedman and Eight Not-Perfect Nights of Hanukkah By Sarah Kapit, illustrated by Genevieve Kote

(Henry Holt and Co.)

Rachel plans activities for each night of Hanukkah, such as cooking latkes and having a dreidel contest, but her brother doesn't feel like doing any of them. When an accident happens, it's up to Rachel to get the family back into the Hanukkah spirit. Ages 7–10



DID YOU KNOW?

The Cincinnati Enquirer first reported staycations as a vacation option in 1944.

How to...



Take a winter staycation

Discover all the adventures that are close to home.

Winter is a special time of year to make plans to enjoy the season right where you live. You'll soon have time off from school, and many attractions are less crowded and expensive than they are during warmer times of the year. With an adult's help, taking the time to get to know your own town or city can help you learn its heritage and appreciate your surroundings in a new light. Here's how to get started.

Schedule it

Just as you would if you were going on a trip out of town, you'll want to plan your staycation for a time when you and your family members aren't busy with commitments. Talk to everyone about which days would work best. Also try to complete any household chores or homework you are responsible for in advance so you don't have to worry about those tasks during your staycation.



Check out holiday lights.

a historic home you can tour, holiday lights to see, a landmark you've overlooked, or a popular restaurant you've never been to. A local museum, zoo, or aquarium might have an exhibit you haven't seen.

Pursue a new activity

When it's cold outside, you can try a range of indoor activities on your staycation. Find out what sports your local recreation center offers, like volleyball, racquetball, or fencing. Your local library may have Lego clubs, makerspace activities, or chess lessons. Now is also a good time to sharpen your skills at winter activities like ice skating at your local rink. Many state parks permit sledding on designated hillsides or offer free or inexpensive cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowtubing.

Consider day trips

Although your town is a great place for a staycation, anywhere that is within a short drive—where you don't have to stay overnight—can be included on your itinerary. Talk to your family members about where you could go that is one to two hours away. Then enjoy exploring and making memories together!

Go on a food tour



Many cities offer guided tours of local food attractions. An adult can help you find one in your city, or you can plan your own with family and friends! Here's how.

Pick a theme. Decide with your group what you want to eat on your tour. You could focus on one food (like pizza) or the cuisine in a particular neighborhood.

Map your route. Discuss whether you'll take a walking tour or you'll need someone to drive. Use a mapping tool like Google Maps to plan your route.

Sample the food. Now it's time to try the food! You can jot down opinions and quotes in a notebook or a notes app and give scores based on taste.



FUN FACT

Former First Lady Nancy Reagan served pull-apart bread in the White House at Christmas in 1985, which led to its popularity in the US.



WARNING!

Ask for an adult's permission before using a mixer, the stove, or the oven.

Bake up glazed pull-apart bread

Ingredients

For the bread

- 1 stick butter, melted, plus more for greasing the pan
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Two 16-ounce cans store-bought refrigerated homestyle biscuit dough (such as Pillsbury Grands)

For the glaze

- 4 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 4 tablespoons butter, room temperature
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 to 4 tablespoons milk

Instructions

1. Heat oven to 350° F and generously butter a Bundt pan. In a shallow bowl, combine the brown sugar, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, and salt. Mix well.
2. Cut the biscuit dough into quarters. Working a few pieces at a time, dunk them in the melted butter, then transfer to the sugar and spice mix, tossing to coat. Place the pieces into the prepared pan and repeat with remaining biscuits.
3. Drizzle any remaining melted butter over the top and sprinkle with any remaining sugar and spice mix. Bake the monkey bread for 30 minutes or until the biscuits are puffed and browned. Carefully remove the bread from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes before inverting it onto a serving plate. Let cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, combine the cream cheese, butter, powdered sugar, vanilla, and ginger in a large bowl and beat with an electric mixer to combine. Add the milk, 1 tablespoon at a time, while continuing to mix, until the glaze is the consistency of honey. Spoon the glaze over the monkey bread and serve with plenty of napkins. Makes 16 servings.

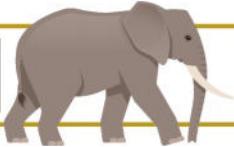


LIFE HACK

SNAP A GREAT FAMILY PHOTO

When the holidays are approaching and relatives are getting together, many families decide to take a group photo. You can help! First, gather your family members in a setting where they will be comfortable, like outside your home or in a nearby park. Position everyone in a spot where they are standing in full natural shade so the sun won't be dappled across their faces or in their eyes. Ask everyone to relax and to avoid standing up perfectly straight—if they bend a knee or an elbow, they will appear less stiff and more natural. Vary poses, from smiling to silly. Finally, take a couple of pictures after the photo shoot is over—candid shots often make the best photos!





Puzzles



Keyword crossword

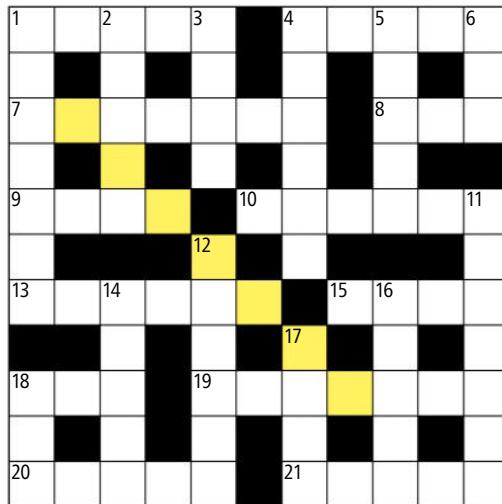
Once you have completed the crossword, transfer the letters in the yellow boxes, in order, into the boxes below to get the answer to the Keyword question.

ACROSS

- 1 Like a squirrel's tail or Einstein's mustache
- 4 Elegant Viennese dance popular with couples in the 1800s
- 7 Game played on a lawn with mallets
- 8 Wet alternative to a broom
- 9 Areas in an atlas not colored light blue
- 10 ___ Appleseed (true-life American legend)
- 13 Planet known for its rings
- 15 Vessel that carries blood toward the heart
- 18 Animal that outwits a crow in a fable
- 19 Meat sometimes served with breakfast
- 20 Male singing voice
- 21 In "Peanuts," a tree eats these items belonging to Charlie Brown

DOWN

- 1 ___ up (puts on a seat belt)
- 2 Silverware item
- 3 "Mind ___ own business"
- 4 Name of the assistant to real-life Alexander Graham Bell and fictional Sherlock Holmes
- 5 Sour yellow fruit
- 6 Slang word for "nothing" alongside zilch and nada
- 11 Baseball team that plays in the Bronx, New York
- 12 What most pencils come with, because nobody's perfect
- 14 Like someone from Austin or Dallas
- 16 Precise
- 17 Very long tooth in an elephant or walrus
- 18 In excellent health



Keyword question: Of all the kinds of mammals on Earth, which group is the largest, containing 40% of all animal species?



**ANSWERS
CAN BE
FOUND ON
PAGE 29.**

CODE CRACKER

In this coded list of beverages, every letter has been replaced with a substitute. The same substitutions are used throughout the list. Hint: Every X here is an uncoded A. Use the letter patterns you find to crack the code. (NEED ANOTHER HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

G	P	T	T	L	B	A
B	T	L	H	B	T	H
A	H	V	M	L	V	X

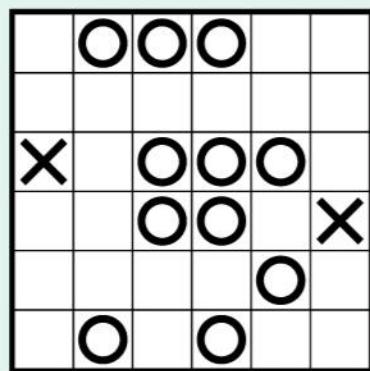
THREE FOR ALL

Sort this list into three familiar three-part phrases, like THREE-RING CIRCUS or SALT LAKE CITY.

SIDE ROW BACK WAY SEATS
POSSIBLE WHEN EFFECTS FRONT

Hit or miss

Place an X or O in each empty square so there are never more than three X's or O's together in a row, column, or diagonal. Hint: If you find three in a row of one letter, you can put the other letter into the spaces at either end.



Spot the difference

These two pictures of Denali appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?



That's unbelievable!



Hotel looks like a barnyard bird

A giant rooster stands over the town of Campuestohan, in the Philippines. It is the largest building in the shape of a chicken—and it's also a hotel. The 114-foot structure contains 15 bedrooms and is part of a resort with swimming pools, a restaurant, and sculptures of dinosaurs and other colorful characters. Its creator, Ricardo Cano Gwapo Tan, said, "I had a vision to make something with a wow factor." Tan said he chose a rooster because "it looks calm and commanding, imposing and strong, which reflects the attitude of our people."



Two of the clothing creations

When art is hung out to dry

Many people dread doing laundry—but to Helga Stentzel, it is an art form. She creates images out of clothing hung on clotheslines, including a cow in a field, a sloth on a branch, and a goofy face in a brick wall. Her imagination turns pants and sweatshirts into unicorns and red and orange socks into a chicken flying over the New York City skyline. Stentzel said she discovered the medium when she was hanging out a pair of pants and realized it resembled a horse's head. She said her work is about finding magic in everyday objects.



Crowd flocks to smelly flower

A stinky flower in Australia is fuming where it's planted. The Titan Arum plant is better known as the "corpse flower" because of the odor it gives off when it blooms to entice pollinators like flies and beetles. The plant attracts crowds due to its unpredictable blooming schedule, which may take place once in 10 years and lasts up to two days. With such a small window to get a whiff, about 5,000 people lined up at Geelong Botanic Garden to experience the stench. Some said it smelled like a dead mouse, a "stinky pond," or "really bad rotten feet."



Old fountain's cool new function

Skateboarding is one of the world's fastest-growing sports, so why not pop an ollie at one of the world's most famous landmarks? The Trevi Fountain in Rome, Italy, is being drained of water and repurposed as a skate park. In years past, tourists could make a wish and toss a coin into the 18th-century fountain, but city officials said it was wasting too much water. Instead, visitors will soon be able to drop in for a skate "sesh" in the smooth stone bowl. Is this story real, or is it a fakie?*

but a small pool has been set up nearby for coin tossing.

*Fake! Sorry, skaters. The Trevi Fountain was temporarily drained for cleaning and restoration, not for sports. Access is restricted until the fountain reopens.



Your turn

Editor's note

Each time we survey our readers about the stories they like best in *The Week Junior*, our coverage of animals emerges toward the top. If that subject is a favorite of yours, you'll have plenty to enjoy in this issue! In our news pages, we report on two new wolf packs that were discovered in California—a positive development for the species (p3). In our animals section, we highlight recent studies about cats' ability to recognize language (p10) and how riflebirds use their beaks to drum on their feathers (p11). Elsewhere in the issue, we cover the winner of this year's National Dog Show, a pug named Vito (p3), plus a parade of sweater-wearing dogs in the UK (p6). And on our back cover, we bring you an image of a rabbit in winter, selected by our art department. Which of these pages interested you most? Or did you have another favorite story in the issue? We always enjoy hearing from you at hello@theweekjunior.com.



Andrea Barbalich
Editor-in-Chief



CHARITY OF THE WEEK



Operation Warm

This organization donates new winter coats and shoes to children in need throughout North America. In the past 25 years, the group has helped more than 6 million children by providing "physical warmth" and "emotional warmth." It believes that when children have basic needs met, they can build confidence and succeed in life. Find out more at operationwarm.org.

**OPERATION
WARM** more
than
a coat

RECENT READS YOU RECOMMEND TO OTHERS



▲ "Frindle was a very funny story, and I think others should read it too!" Declan, 9, Arizona

▼ "Hilo is about a boy who crashed on Earth. I love it because it's hilarious, action-packed, and perfect." Musa, 8, New York



▲ "I love Allergic because it talks about struggles that people go through and how they can overcome them by trying new things!" Eden, 13, New Mexico

▼ "I liked reading Heidi by Johanna Spyri. It's about a sweet-natured girl who has to move out of her home, the mountains!" Sanjana, 8, Texas



**THE WEEK
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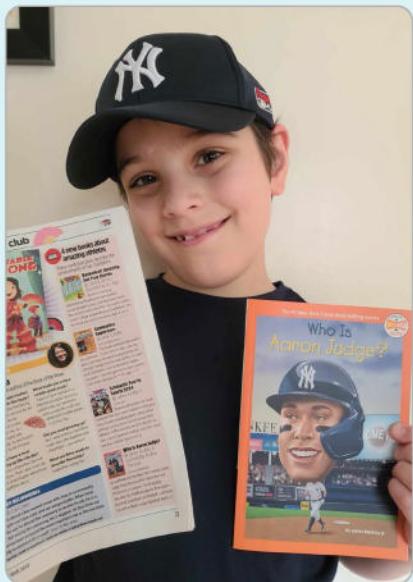
IT'S YOUR TURN

Email your news, views, and photos to hello@theweekjunior.com.

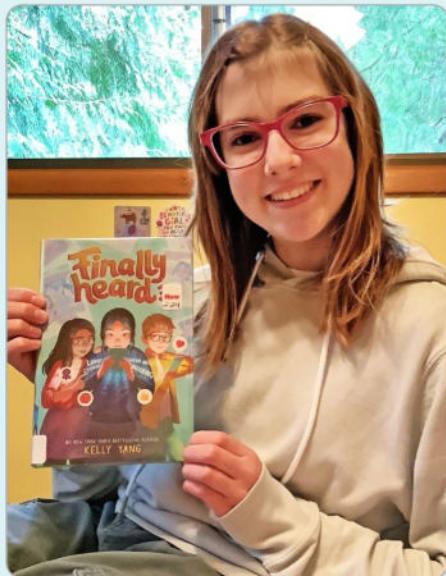
Your turn



Thank you to everyone who has sent us photos of themselves with a book they've enjoyed reading. If there's a title you want to share, have an adult email a photo to hello@theweekjunior.com, along with anything you'd like to say about why you liked the book.



▼ "I read *Finally Heard*, one of *The Week Junior*'s book recommendations. It was great!"
Vivian, 13, Oregon



▲ "My favorite sport is baseball, so I really liked reading *Who Is Aaron Judge?* by James Buckley Jr." Adam, 8, Massachusetts



▲ "I love the Percy Jackson series, and I can't wait to read the new book." Nathan, 10, New York



▲ "I borrowed *Faker* from our city library. It is a very interesting book." Vihaan, 11, California

GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: COURTESY OPERATION WARM



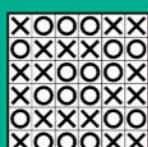
Puzzle answers (from page 26)



Keyword answer: rodents

Code cracker
smoothie
hot chocolate
iced tea

Three for all
way back when
possible side effects
front row seats



Quiz answers (from page 30) **1 b** Neel **2 True** **3 Demure** **4 c** Toronto Sceptres **5 c** State Dining Room **6** Her mom **7 True** **8 c** 1998 **9 b** William McKinley **10 True** **11 Corpse flower** **12 False**. They have a stronger emotional reaction to art when they see it in person. **13 a** California **14 Eight** **15 a** Chicken

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your full name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.



Quiz

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 What is the name of the alien character in *Star Wars: Skeleton Crew*?

- a) Fern b) Neel c) Wim

a b c

2 True or false? Photographer Ami Vitale once dressed up as a giant panda in order to take pictures of giant pandas.

True False

3 What is Dictionary.com's word of the year for 2024?

4 Which team won the first game on opening day of the 2024 PWHL season?

- a) Boston Fleet
b) Montreal Victoire
c) Toronto Sceptres

a b c

5 Ornaments featuring children's self-portraits hang on Christmas trees in which room at the White House?

- a) Blue Room b) Cross Hall
c) State Dining Room

a b c

6 In the book *Happy & Sad & Everything True*, who embarrasses Dee at school?

7 True or false? A study found that the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs helped ants thrive.

True False

8 In what year was the Pokémon Trading Card Game originally released?

- a) 1996 b) 1997 c) 1998

a b c



ANSWERS
CAN BE
FOUND ON
PAGE 29.



9 The mountain Denali was once named after which US President?

- a) Abraham Lincoln
b) William McKinley
c) Theodore Roosevelt

a b c

10 True or false? Studies showed that cats learn to associate words with images more quickly than human babies do.

True False

11 The Titan Arum plant in Australia is better known as what?

12 True or false? A recent study found that people have a stronger emotional reaction to art when they see photos of it.

True False

13 Two new packs of gray wolves have recently been identified in what state?

- a) California
b) Oregon
c) Washington

a b c

14 In a college football Rivalry Week game, how many overtime possessions did it take Georgia to beat Georgia Tech?

15 In the town of Campuestohan, in the Philippines, there is a hotel shaped like what animal?

- a) Chicken
b) Duck
c) Swan

a b c

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HAPPY HOPPERS

Wild rabbits, which are social animals and prefer to live in groups, have long hind legs that help them jump as high as 3 feet into the air.